

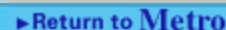




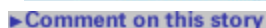

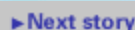
Find a beautiful selection of new homes in Michigan.



Saturday, November 3, 2001



The Detroit News


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## ENTERTAINMENT

## Funds clear way for new lock at Soo Locks

By Associated Press

**SAULT STE. MARIE** -- Congress has agreed to spend money on a new lock at Soo Locks to ease freighters through the St. Mary's River here -- 15 years after first approving the idea.

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Lawmakers approved an appropriations bill Thursday that includes the first \$3 million toward what is expected to be a \$225 million project. It will take at least five years to complete.

A House-Senate conference committee added the money to a multibillion-dollar appropriation for water and energy projects nationwide.

Construction could begin next year, said U.S. Rep. Bart Stupak, D-Menominee. The Great Lakes states will help pay for construction; Michigan approved its \$14 million share in October.

The Soo Locks complex includes four locks. Three were built at least 50 years ago and are too small to handle the 1,000-foot-long bulk carriers that keep steel mills supplied with ore from the iron ranges around Lake Superior.

Glen Nekvasil, spokesman for the Lake Carriers Association, which represents U.S. vessels in the Great Lakes, said Great Lakes freighters also carry millions of tons of grain, coal and stone from Lake Superior to industrial cities on the lower lakes.

The Soo Locks have been in operation since 1855, raising and lowering ships by 21 feet so they can move between Lake Superior and Lake Huron.

Two of the locks, Sabin and Davis, were built more than 80 years ago. MacArthur was completed in 1944 and Poe opened in 1968. Of the four, only the Poe Lock, at 1,200 feet long and 110 feet wide, can accommodate the largest Great Lakes freighters, which are 105 feet wide.

The new lock, which has yet to be named, will replace the two oldest locks. Construction is not expected to disrupt traffic.

Shipping interests have argued for years that a second modern lock is needed to ensure that shipping of iron ore would continue even if sabotage or an accident were to disable the Poe Lock.

"The problem that we have, and the justification for the new lock, is that all of the 1,000-footers are constrained to the Poe Lock," said Scott Parker, deputy district engineer for the Army Corps of Engineers in Detroit. "If something were to happen to that lock, we would lose the capacity of 70 percent of the U.S. fleet to move from the upper lakes to the lower lakes."

Congress authorized a new lock in 1986 but had not appropriated money for construction.

Together with Congress' approval in October of a new Coast Guard icebreaker, the appropriation for a new lock means the government is committed to spending more than \$300 million to support commercial shipping in the Great Lakes.

The new icebreaker, scheduled for launch in late 2004, will replace the Mackinaw, a

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290-foot workhorse that has been the main heavy icebreaker on the Great Lakes since 1944.

The replacement vessel, to be built for \$82 million, will also be known as the Mackinaw. Like the current version, it will be based in Cheboygan in northern Lake Huron.

It is expected to be 240 feet long and capable of moving at 3 knots through water covered by 30 inches of ice.

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